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VALLEY AND VILLA
OF HORACE.

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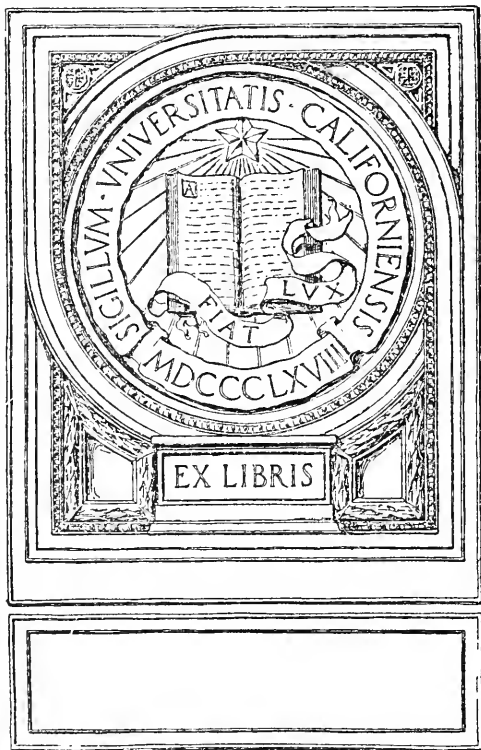
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THE VALLEY AND VILLA
OF HORACE

PAYSON SIBLEY WILD

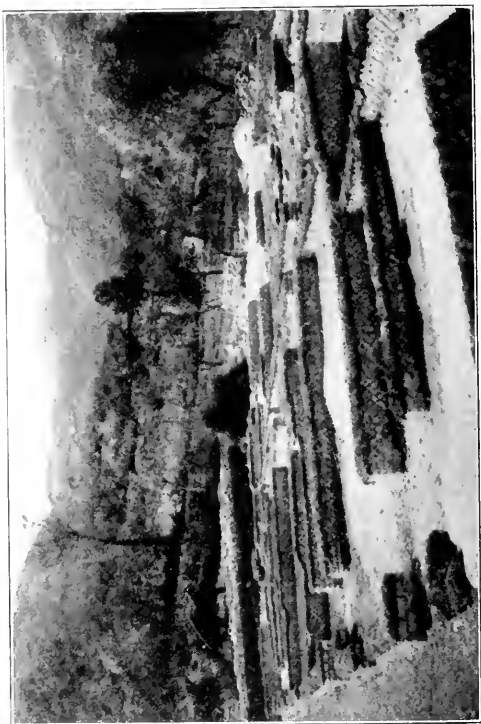


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The Valley and Villa
of Horace .



VILLA HORATIANA AS IT APPEARS TO-DAY

The Valley and Villa of Horace

By
Payson Sibley Wild



Chicago Literary Club
1915

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MEMORIAE
I. G. C.
DOCTI ET AMABILIS
QUI UNA CUM G. L. H. ET P. S. W.
ITER HORATIANUM FECIT
LIBELLUM SACRUM ESSE VOLUIT
AUCTOR

186534

ILLUSTRATIONS

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The author desires to acknowledge most gratefully the kindness and rare courtesy of his friend, Professor O. F. Long (quem Di ament!), whose photographs of the Licenza Valley and the ruins of the villa, taken about the time of the author's visit, adorn these pages.





THE VALLEY AND VILLA OF HORACE



HIS paper has no designs upon your critical faculties. Nor does it aim to make any contribution to Horatian hermeneutics, for the pagan lyrist (pagan because human and natural) has long been the cloyed recipient of interpretations without number. For the time being we are merely Epicurean pilgrims, followers of him who succeeded no one and had no successor in Roman lyric verse; admirers of the poet whom multitudes have held to be a vest-pocket edition of universality, the quintessential expression of trite and homely yet solemn and inevitable truth contained in a perfection of form that is still unrivalled.

The cosmic scene-shifters, who are so noisily and fiendishly busy at this time

dragging from the universal stage before our very eyes the settings of an old era and lugging in the furniture of a new, cannot permanently divert our attention from the great and the wise who played their part in earlier scenes. We should stifle, if we could not from time to time return to our ancient heritage. More than ever is the wisdom of the ages necessary; more than ever must we lean on the prophets of old for such comfort as is at all obtainable, for our prophets to-day, from Haeckel and Bergson to Pastor Russell and Billy Sunday, are thrashing vainly on padded couches, while the foam of madness drools from their purple lips. Who to-day could say to us with such elusive grace and beauty, and yet so simply:

“With purpose wise, in shadowy night the god
Hath hid the future’s outcome from us all,
And laughs at our undue anxiety.
With tranquil heart each daily problem meet!
All else, like some great river’s mighty flow,
Is borne along, now gliding peacefully
Within its confines to th’ Etruscan Sea,
Now rolling rocks and stones and broken trees,
And cattle, aye, and houses too, together,
With echoing of the hills and neighboring wolds,
While lashed to fury are the peaceful streams
By this fierce deluge.”¹

¹ Od. III, 29, 29.

“Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte premit deus,
Ridetque si mortalis ultra
Fas trepidat.”

It seems not unreasonable to believe that if he whose wide range of mental vision, broad interests, courage, ardor, and sanity, have made his work a beacon in literature and an interpretation of life for high and low were alive to-day, we might safely expect to hear his voice lifted in some large way, sanely and effectively. He who, with a mental poise that is our envy and despair, saw one civilization give birth to a new order of things, could probably view with equal detachment the parturition, going on to-day, without "twilight sleep," of a lusty litter of events, whose destiny is still a weighty subject of discussion in the council chambers of Olympus.

But Horace we have not with us in the flesh in these trying times of "blood and iron," of quasi demigods in "shining armor." Let us then visit him, forgetting for a little the shouting of the scene-shifters, who have so rudely broken the continuity of our illusions; forgetting that the world is an armed camp, and that Libitina is holding an international inquest; forgetting that the seismic god has visited with destruction the beautiful valley whither we are to go—forgetting these things, let us catch the early Tivoli train on a perfect Roman morning in April. We shall see what has been seen before by thousands of devoted pilgrims; we shall do the things that many others have

done, and our observations will doubtless savor of the triteness that has turned many a travel sketch into a vapid conflux of trivialities. But for all that it is good to "re-visit Yarrow." Unless his imagination has lost its vibrant quality, there is a thrill for even the most hardened globe-trotter in each successive pilgrimage to the haunts of the great dead, whether it be Concord, Box Hill, Weimar, the Forum, or the Valley of the Licenza in the Sabine Hills.

I believe we are to infer from certain passages in his writings that Horace used to make the journey between his farm and Rome on mule back. Our progress toward the Sabine country, as the train leaves the environs of Rome and dallies among the poppies that line the track—the engine driver evidently has imbibed something of their soporific influence—is apparently no more rapid than the poet's, the only difference being, so far as I can observe, that we are not astride of anything. But our rate of speed matters little, for the Campagna lies before us with all its charm. Off to the right are the golf links of ancient memory, where one may view in a glass case the well preserved bronze head of Maecenas' driving iron, which tradition says was found by the osseous remains of what Cuvier declared to be skeletal fragments of an Ethiopian youth. Conjectural explanations have been

numerous, but we shall not stop to discuss them. Those who play golf will be the best guessers. In passing I might say that the average visitor to these links should fortify himself, if possible, with some sort of formal document of introduction, for the club membership to-day is largely British, and one should therefore not swing breezily into the club's front door, and announce himself as a member of the Peewee Valley, the Piscataqua, the Scrub Oak, the Shoshone Falls, or what not, Country Club, thereby thinking to secure for himself a cordial entrée and an invitation to luncheon. Such an aspirant to the club's privileges will shortly find himself explaining his connection with his renowned home club to the all-enveloping ether, and much rarefied at that. I was deterred myself from seeking an official passport by the fear that the influential friend to whom I had thought to apply might feel impelled to write in my behalf to the club authorities what Horace wrote in a letter introducing Septimius to the future Tiberius:

"Plea upon plea, believe me, I have used
In hope he'd hold me from the task excused;
Yet feared the while it might be thought I feigned
Too low what influence I perchance have gained;
Dissembling it as nothing with my friends,
To keep it for my own peculiar ends.
So, to escape such dread reproach, I put
My blushes by, and boldly urge my suit."¹

¹Epp. 1, 9. Martin's tr.

But we are still crawling eastward, and it is getting much warmer. The aqueducts, bridging the long and shallow gulf between the Seven Hills and the Delectable Mountains; suggestive heaps of ruins that dot the landscape in every direction; the Sabine promontories ahead and the Alban Hills to the south,—all these beautiful things, sleeping beneath the dreamy sunshine of an Italian Spring, feed our contemplative faculties and nourish our high meditations. We are in a mood quite Augustan as the train comes to an actual stop at Acque Albule, where suddenly the sweet odor of dew is supplanted by the stifling smell of sulphuretted hydrogen, and for a moment we fancy: "*When we have descended whither our Father Aeneas, rich Tullus, and Ancus have preceded us, we are but dust and shadow.*"¹ But we are soon reassured, for the sign on the station is neither Avernus nor Cocytus; no Stygian gondolier in filthy array appears to be doing business on the nauseous waters of the sulphur pools, and the train rambles on again.

To the northeast of us we see and identify Monte Gennaro, one of the high spots of the Sabines, four or five miles due east of which lies the chief object of our pilgrimage. Monte Gennaro is a prominent but

¹Od. IV, 7, 14.

friendly summit, whose faint outlines used daily to greet us from our balcony in Rome near the site of the ancient Gardens of Sallust.

And now we are climbing into Tivoli, still a glorious spot, though its dust has been carried away on the feet of thousands who knew nothing of its sacred character and rich associations. By lay and cleric, from Horace to the authors of Newdigate prize poems, have its delights been rhymed and prosed. Lo, are they not contained in all the books of the chronicles of enraptured dabsters of every nation and every clime! But not for us to-day are “*the echoing grotto of Albunea, the Anio tumbling in cascades, Tiburnus’ sacred grove, and the orchards wet with trickling rills,*”¹ though half a hundred uproarious Jehus would be only too glad to show them to us at certain fixed (or unfixed) rates—in addition to other good and valuable considerations, which are not the least important part of every vehicular contract in the Italy of to-day. To the tender mercies of these charioteers we consign the majority of our fellow passengers, who, like so many of their kind, hear only the megaphone call of the show places; whose ears are not attuned to that thinner yet sweeter note floating *ex valle vatis vegetante memoriam*.²

¹Od. I, 7, 12.

²From the memory-stirring valley of the bard.

With an empty train and a more pronounced sense of belonging to the elect we now find ourselves being borne into the Sabine territory. In a short half-hour we are at Vicovaro, as it is called to-day, the Varia of Horace's time, a market town, where the poet and his tenants probably disposed of their produce and obtained farm and household supplies. But we do not dismount here; our destination lies a parasang farther on—the monohippic "*Stazione*" of Mandela.

Before we set foot, however, on sacred soil, shall we not invoke a muse? Not our poet's this time, but the muse of one of those numerous umbratical English poetasters of the Early Nineteenth Century Renaissance, as it were—that period in the dusty arcana of which repose so many blighted literary aspirations. With a will to appreciate greater than his power of execution, this classical enthusiast of a century ago implored Calliope's aid in the composition of a mildly denatured epic, that seems to sing itself best on the melodeon or the harpsichord. Only in bibliographical research or in the preparation of club papers do these curiosities come to light, for which perchance we should be duly grateful. Sprinkled with the inevitable "*haec fabula docet*"'s that characterize the product of this minor renaissance, banal and commonplace though it is for the most



LICENZA FROM THE NORTHERN END OF THE RUINS



part throughout, this too lengthy Song of the Sabine Farm has yet its "purple patch" on its fustian pants, and arouses our enthusiasm by its author's devotion to the spirit of Horace, and his great interest in the latter's Sabine estate. Horace is literally and exhaustively the author's guide. The poet speaks in every paragraph. Now that we are at our valley's gateway, let us summon Horace to our side in the words of our English coreligionist, as we find them in his opening lines:¹

"In Tibur's scenes who would not linger long
That feels the love of Nature, or of Song?
But Horace calls us hence, upbraids delay,
And comes, himself, companion of our way.
'Tis not the dream of Fancy—for I hear
His own words vibrate on my charmed ear,
While pleasure, mixt with awe, my bosom fills.

'Yours, O ye Nine, I mount the Sabine Hills!
Whether the cool Praeneste charmed before,
Tibur supine, or Baiae's liquid shore!'²
'O when shall I behold thee, rural seat!
When, in the calm of undisturbed retreat,
With books, and idle hours, and soothing sleep,
The cares of life in sweet oblivion steep!'³

Thus, still embodied in the tuneful page,
That once enraptured an Augustan Age
(And shall, as long as Taste and Virtue last,
Charm future ages, as it charmed the past),
The Poet speaks—'tis He! He meets my view,

¹Robert Bradstreet (1810). ²Od. III, 4, 21.

³Sat. II, 6, 60.

In the same form his sportive pencil drew:
'Of stature small, with locks of early gray,'¹

While wit and sense in his mild features play.
To whom I thus: Bard, whom all tastes admire!
Great Judge, great Master of the Latian Lyre,
Thou wilt not, with fastidious pride, refuse
To hold sweet converse with a pilgrim muse,
Who seeks the spot where thou wast wont to stray,
Seat of thy life, and subject of thy lay,—

But still be present at thy votary's side,
Her kind companion, and her faithful guide,
Pointing each object, as she moves along,
That claims a line of thy immortal song!"

There is the usual knot of unoccupied humanity on the station platform, a class that has made a distinct name for itself wherever railroads have penetrated the world over. We observe the women especially, having perhaps subliminally in mind that misty time when celibate warrior bands from the Rome of Romulus deemed it expedient for the good of the race to convert this fair Sabine country into a forcible Gretna Green. But as we make our way through the idlers, we opine that a recurrence of a similar deflo-rating expedition would not be probable for lack of sufficient incentive.

We turn the corner of the station and an involuntary exclamation escapes us:

*"Eheu, vos umbrae Horati et muli curti!"*²

¹Epp. I, 20, 24.

²Ah! Shades of Horace and his dockèd mule!

For there stands a fully equipped, modern gasoline omnibus marked "Licenza," all ready to take us thither. *Paene concidimus!*¹ We decide to take it, for by so doing we shall have more time later for the day's investigations and contemplations. It is there; we cannot remove it; we will not let it shatter our dreams. Nevertheless, we had as soon expected to find a boiler factory on Mount Lucretilis as this modern abortion plying the lonely *Via Digentiana*. We are the only Horatians on board. A few natives occupy seats here and there. One voluble Sabine sits directly opposite us, and, easily divining whence we are and whither bound, engages us in affable converse. "Yes," he too has lived in America, and displays, that he may stir us to grievous envy, a huge brass timepiece that cost him "*due dollar*" in some dubious, American three-ball museum. "Yes," he helped to construct the Croton (not the Claudian) aqueduct for three dollars a day, and now resides in affluence and retirement on his Sabine farm. Perhaps he knows "*Orazio*" better than we.

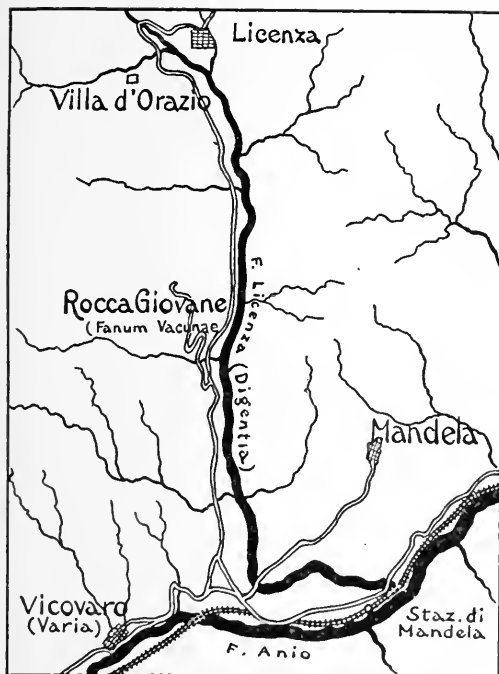
There is little to see from the 'bus windows as the conveyance thunders speedily up the valley. We get it all later afoot. The real peace of the place does not come home to us on account of the chugging

¹We almost collapsed!

motor and grinding wheels. On the right we glimpse an inconspicuous, fairly clear stream of moderate size making its way to the Anio, and we know it is the Licenza, the "*gelidus Digentia rivus*" of the Epistle to Lollius.¹ Rocca Giovane and the former acres of Horace are somewhere on our left. Across the stream are the hills in sparse pea-green which form the eastern boundary of the valley. It is plain that we must wait until we reach the end of the route before we can get our bearings and determine the landmarks. As the valley is only four miles long, we have but a few moments to wait, and so curb our impatience. On a steep, rocky promontory, jutting from the narrow upper end of the valley, is the solidly built, cobblestone village of Licenza. Rounding a curve that carries the highway across the stream sharply to the east, our 'bus deposits us in the tiny square of this hoary, palaeolithic community. We refresh ourselves at the nearest "*taberna*"² and "*popina*"³ combined, with a draft of Horace's own "*Sabinum*," haggle mildly but firmly over the price of a bottle of the same, which is designed to go with our luncheon later, and set forth to see the town and spy out the land. Now that the 'bus has disappeared we are startled at the quietness which reigns

¹Epp. 1, 18, 104. "Digentia's cooling stream."

²"Wine Shop." ³"Cook Shop."



MAP OF THE LICENZA VALLEY

supreme. From innumerable doors, alleys, and other mysterious openings silent hordes of chubby children steal forth and follow in our wake, as we climb the chief village street. They are unresponsive to our kindly suggestion to disperse, and so we take them on, feeling like Pied Pipers, but without malevolence. Our peregrination in the direction taken is abruptly ended. We have reached the brink of the town, and are gazing over a precipice. But the view! The upper valley and all that in it is, is before us. Gray-green slopes of scanty olive and grape; new grass; fresh-leaved holm and ilex here and there; the wandering rivulet; a few unmoved and unmovable donkeys in odd spots absorbing the warmth; an occasional rustic lazily wielding his mattock; and all around us on every side the enveloping hills. This is all that for the moment we actually see; but it is beautiful, satisfying, restful. The peace and simple charm, rather than any wild beauty, or distinctive scenic feature, are what Horace emphasizes in all his allusions to this rural retreat. We can now, as we never could before, see why. No nerve could remain long shattered or even sensitive after a brief exposure to air like this, which is at once an anaesthetic and a tonic.

As we emerge from our reverie and begin to conjecture whither to look for the

fields that have been sung into undying fame, we are all at once conscious of another presence. We turn to greet—not Horace (though it would not have surprised us one whit had it been he), but the village padre, who courteously offers to indicate to us the objects of interest. We are grateful for his services, and with deepest interest look and listen. With a scarcely noticeable movement of his hand he dismisses the now much augmented flock of children, whose behavior it must be said had been most exemplary, for they had neither turned “cart wheels” at the rate of a dozen per *centesimo*, nor annoyed us by their infantile importunities, after the manner of the hardened offspring of the Roman proletariat. Turning then to us the padre points across the valley *macro indice digito*¹ to a little cleared spot perhaps a kilometer away, that we can barely see. “*La Villa d’Orazio*,” he says. With our field glasses we can make out something that seems to resemble the partially erected foundations of a house. “The *signori* will remember this, will they not?” queries our mentor, and forthwith he recites to us in charmingly accented Latin the familiar stanzas:

“No ivory walls, no gilded halls
Mark my abode’s extravagance;
As upstart heir of millionaire

¹ With his lean forefinger.

I've gained no swift inheritance.
 But friends in me find loyalty,
 A kindly vein of genius too;
 By rich men sought, though I have naught,
 What further crave I, gods, of you?
 Nor seek I more from his rich store
 My ably generous friend. In fine
 Enough delight for this glad wight
 Is just yon Sabine farm of mine."¹

The padre is indeed a treasure trove, and at once arouses our personal interest. He recites so delightfully too. The old sonorous lines, leavened with the limpidity of the liquid Latin of to-day, seem to fall from his lips a veritable rill of verbal gold.

But there is a cry of woe down the street. From every dwelling emerge on the instant anxious parents and grandparents. The air is full of distressful volubility. We hasten toward an excited group of children, but the padre has been quicker than we. He has a weeping *bambino* in his arms, that has just been handed up by a vine-dresser from a six by eight perpendicular vineyard situated a few feet below the parapet that guards the main street. The child is unhurt but frightened. Having soothed it the padre hands it to its mother, whose objurgations—of even greater vividness, in vigor of thought and figure of speech, than that which we phlegmatic people so readily attribute to our

¹ "Non ebur neque aureum
 Mea renidet in domo lacunar . . ."
 Od. II, 18.



LOOKING NORTH ACROSS THE "HORTUS" WITH ITS "PISCINA"

Romance neighbors — continue to strike our ears as we return to our observations. The padre laughingly explains. "It is a common occurrence," he says. "In fact, frequent news items appear in our district papers, from Licenza, Saracenesco, Rocca Giovane, and other villages that cling to pinnacles, to the effect that Giovanni, Maria, or whoever it may have been, 'fell out of town' recently." We scrutinize the padre's face keenly; yes, there is something in his eye, and soon we are all shaking together with silent laughter.

"And is that Lucretilis?" I ask, pointing to the wide slopes above the *Villa d'Orazio*. The padre nods. "Yes, all of yonder hillside, how far up we do not know, but as far down possibly as Rocca Giovane, comprised the Horatian estate. We have no means of determining its exact acreage. Conjecture has hazarded many estimates, but all lack the supporting facts. The poet himself usually refers to his farm, as you know, in affectionate diminutives, as, for example, in the epistle to his superintendent:

*'Vilice silvarum et mihi me reddentis agelli';*¹

and elsewhere he speaks of his

¹"Good bailiff of my farm, that snug domain,
Which makes its master feel himself again."
(Conington's tr. Epp. 1, 11.)

*'Purae rivus aquae silvaque iugerum
Paucorum' "* . . .¹

We remember the passages well, and, eager to hear more of the padre's beautiful Latin, ask him to recite to us the immortal invitation to Tyndaris.²

The padre is very obliging, and begins, while our eyes rest dreamily on the Lucretilian summit, and we wonder if now in its sadly denuded glades Faunus could find a hiding place.

"Swift Faunus often doth exchange
Lycaeus for my lovely range
Lucretilis, and there doth keep
In sheltered dale, from rain and gale
And Summer's sun, my tender sheep.

In safety run through wood and wold
My ewes that stray far from the fold
In search of thyme and arbutus.
They fear no snake in fen or brake
No wolf that wanders ravenous,

Whenever Pan with dulcet reed
In vale and on Ustica's mead
Awakes the echoes, Tyndaris.
The Gods love me ; my piety,
My lyric song have won me this!

For thee shall Plenty's horn be spilled,
With rural joys shalt thou be filled ;

¹"My stream of pure water, my woodland of a few acres." (Od. III, 16, 29.)

²"Velox amoenum saepe Lucretilem
Mutat Lycao Faunus, et igneam
Defendit aestatem capellis
Usque meis pluviosque ventos." (Od. I, 17.)

OUTLINE OF THE "PISCINA"





Thou here in this secluded dell,
From Procyon's heat a safe retreat,
Shalt on Anacreon's lyre tell

Of Circe's and Penelope's
Joint love for him who roved the seas.
Here shalt thou sip — 'tis innocent —
My Lesbian wine beneath this vine,
Nor know unseemly merriment.

Thou needst not fear lest thy good name
From wanton swain shall suffer shame;
The wreath that doth thy fair locks crown,
(Let him beware!) he may not tear,
Nor rend thy unoffending gown."

But we must not linger in Licenza, although we are loath to part company with so excellent an expositor of Horatian charm as our new friend the padre. After a most cordial exchange of farewells, we are off, having a care, however, for the low parapet, lest we too "fall out of town."

But stay! It is the voice of the padre calling to us. Will we not remain just a paltry few moments until he can open for us

*"Non ante verso lene merum cado"?*¹

Besides, he has something antique, of great interest to palaeographers, to show us. Will the *signori* not tarry a little quarter of an hour? We are not long in deciding. The clergy were ever past masters in wine connoisseurship; and the prospect of a "*pia tes-*

¹A jar of mellow wine with seal intact. (Od. III, 29, 2.)

ta, nata Consule Manlio''¹ is too much for us. Furthermore, the padre's ancient curio may be well worth investigating. Many a rarity has come to light from the subfuscous shelves of humble and unknown incunabula collectors. We turn about and accompany the padre to his modest abode.

The wine is beyond cavil, full of the sunshine of former days, and our hearts are glad within us. Now for his treasure. The padre brings it forth reverently, divers sheets of ancient papyrus covered with Latin characters. "This," he says unctuously, "is one of the most interesting bits of *Horatiana* in existence. I will tell you as briefly as I can what it is. It was found here in Licenza many years ago, and has been carefully preserved and handed down by my predecessors in office. These rotting pieces of papyrus are no other than copies of what must have been a country newspaper issued here in Licenza during the early empire. See, here is its name." And in faded but plain letters we read: "*Praeco Digentianus*." ² "Only a small portion is now decipherable," continues the padre; "allow me to read and explain. Here is the first item; it seems to be real 'country' Latin: '*A few days since a bolt from the blue struck an elm*'

¹"A good old jug put up when Manlius was consul." (Od. III, 21, 1.)

²"The Licenza Herald."

*tree standing in neighbor Flaccus' back pasture, and clean burned up the whole tree. How about it, Quint? We guess you'll think Jupiter cuts some ice now.'*¹ Strangely enough," says the padre, "in the issue for the following week, which I have here, appears what is now the thirty-fourth ode of the first book:

'I, whom the gods had found a client
Rarely with pious rites compliant,
At unbelief disposed to nibble,
And pleased with every sophist quibble—
I, who had deemed great Jove a phantom,
Now own my errors and recant 'em!
Have I not lived of late to witness,
Athwart a sky of passing brightness,
The god, upon his car of thunder,
Cleave the calm elements asunder?
And, through the firmament careering,
Level his bolts with aim unerring?'"²

The padre pauses and refills our glasses, which we drain at a gulp, our amazement having got the better of our discretion.

"The second legible item," the padre goes on, scarcely sipping his glass, "is this: *'We are glad to include this week among our*

¹"Ante paucos dies ictu fulminis ex sereno coelo coniecti, ulmo foliosior, quae in agello Horati nostri erat, deflagavit. Heus Quinte! Quid agis? Nunc visne Iovem pro nihilo putare?"

² Mahoney's tr.

"Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,
Insanientis dum sapientiae
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum
Vela dare atque iterare cursus
Cogor relictos."

other contributions of the sort the following
“pome” by our esteemed and well-known good
fellow down the road. We think it is pretty
good stuff, and ought sure to make a hit with
G. C.’¹ The verses are these:

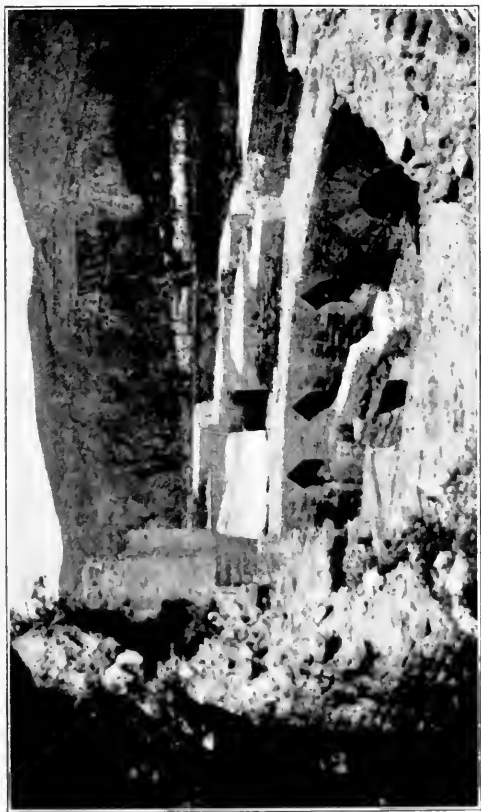
‘Come hither, dear Maecenas, come!
I know my Sabine wine is bum;
But sealed it was by my own hand
That day—our friends will understand—
Th’ applause for thee at Pompey’s grew so
It almost seemed thou wast Caruso;
And echoes fairly made Rome teeter
As back they rolled from old St. Peter.

At home upon the Esquiline
I know thou hast the choicest wine;
That Cales brand and Caecuban
Would warm the heart of god or man.
Such glorious stuff as flavors thy cups
Was never meant to moisten my cups!
But here, Maecenas (’tis no jest),
Vin ordinaire tastes like the best.’²

That Maecenas responded is clear,” says
our host to his auditors, now staring with
glassy eyes at the momentous pages, “from
what we find in the next issue.” Carefully
lifting the top sheets he reads:

¹“Hos versus a nostro combibone noto tam bene
compos’tos, libentes, ut semper, in alias huius editionis
nugas ascribimus. C. Cilnium (Maecenatem) sane
percutient.”

²“Vile potabis modicis Sabinum
Cantharis, Graeca quod ego ipse testa
Conditum levi, datus in theatro
Cum tibi plausus,
Care Maecenas eques, . . .” (Od. I, 20.)



BATHS (OF LATER DATE) AT THE WEST



“‘G. C. Maecenas, the well-known *Fidus Achates*, if we may say so, of Governor *Gustus* and promoter of rural poets, whom we have lately missed from our midst, has just week-ended with our excellent neighbor and budding verse-maker at the latter’s summer cottage.’”¹

By this time we are well on the way to a conviction that we are “*insanientis sapientiae consulti*” de facto, so far as the padre’s excellent *Caecuban* has left us any power of ratiocination at all. But the padre is not done yet. Like helpless babes we accept from his hand our refilled glasses, and listen as in a dream to his voice, which seems somehow to be receding from us.

“The last bit that we have been able to read is this,” he says, raising his voice a little, which was well he did.

“‘During the fore part of the week our Lord of the Manor, so to speak, was nearly killed by a tree falling on him under which he was smoking and composing. We don’t know if the tree was a rotten one or not, or if some god didn’t have it in for him. But at any rate he has sent us some original lines, which haven’t been printed anywhere else.’”²

¹ “C. Cil. Maecenas, ‘fidus Achates’ divi Caesaris clarissimus, et literarum quasi fautor, quem nuper nimis raro nobis in mediis iam videmus, finem hebdomadis apud vicinum bonum et gemminantem versificatorem degit.”

² “Priore hebdomadis parte, a cadente arbore, sub cuius umbra scribens fumansque sedebat, animam

Our host's voice is now miles away as he reads what we know at present as the thirteenth ode of the second book:

“‘O Tree, the man who set thee here
With cursèd hands in a cursèd year,
That thou might'st some day do me harm
And bring disgrace upon my farm:

That man would cut his father's throat,
Nor care a damn whom next he smote;
Some guest perchance on pretext slight
He'd murder in the dead of night.

He'd know Medea's draughts to brew,
And every sort of crime to do.
'Twas he in sooth, thou blackguard stump,
Who put thee there my head to thump.’”¹

The padre has now faded utterly out of our perceptions. In some manner, which I would not divulge if I could, we manage to make our way through the square and out upon the highway leading back to the villa. Gradually our reason returns, and we begin to exchange comments. The sanest observation seems to be that of one of us who says: “It would appear that country editors are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! . . . Isn't Horace just awfully

paene omisit Dominus Villae noster. Utrum arbor fortasse esset putris, an deus iratus poetae impio malum intenderet, nescimus; at tamen ille ad nos hoc poema misit, quod nunc primum vulgo apparet.”

¹“Ille et nefasto te posuit die,
Quicumque primum, et sacrilega manu
Produxit, arbos, in nepotum
Perniciem opprobriumque pagi.”

immortal! . . . How that priest could read those verses! . . . And what Olympian vintages he serves! . . . Here goes our bottle of Sabine into the creek! . . . Tell me, what do you chaps honestly think that old ecclesiastical Ganymede was trying to put over, anyway?"

For a kilometer or so we walk briskly back over the road we traversed earlier in the morning, stopping on the concrete bridge that spans the miniature river to gaze up stream through a rocky gorge at the bald imposing scars that guard the valley's upper reaches. Here there is a suggestion of wildness. Perhaps it was up in there somewhere that Horace, straying "*ultra terminum in silva Sabina*" (beyond the limits of his Sabine wood) with only a walking stick in his hand, charmed into impotence by his Orphean rehearsal of some casual love ditty, the storied lupine wanderer. One of us suggests that we sing "*Integer vitae*," but after canvassing the situation carefully, we wisely refrain. The Sabbath stillness is one deterrent: the padre might hear us and laugh in his flowing sleeve; and again, if there are still wolves about, we cannot sing like Horace; the result might not be the same.

A modest sign on a slender post, standing where a by-road leaves the highway and winds up through a tangle of bushes and young trees, announces the *Villa d'Orazio*.

With considerable eagerness we hurry up through the thicket to a small, fairly level plateau, and are confronted at last by all that is left—plus modern additions—of the most interesting Summer residence of antiquity. By a freakish twist of the mind, I am led to look first of all for the pine tree that Horace, in a little ode to Diana, says overshadowed his villa:

“Thine, virgin goddess, be the pine
That o'er my cottage doth incline.
As years complete shall past me scud,
I'll offer it a young boar's blood—
A youngster hot for porcine jousts,
And meditating sidelong thrusts.”¹

But no such tree is visible. The Huns and the Ostrogoths have converted it into spear-handles. Instead we see a one-headed Cerberus in human garb clambering over the foundation walls toward us with alacrity. His vociferous vocables are evidently meant for us, and we pause. Yes, he is the watchdog of the villa, the government agent in charge of the excavating work, and is regarding us with evident suspicion. Although subsequently we became fully satisfied that this threatening attitude was generic and assumed with malice prepense irrespective

¹“Imminens villae tua pinus esto,
Quam per exactos ego laetus annos
Verris obliquum meditantis ictum
Sanguine donem.” (Od. III, 22.)



UPPER REACHES OF THE LICENZA VALLEY



of persons, yet for the moment it seems to us quite specific for some impalpable reason or another, and our first conscious reaction is a feeling of surprise at being taken so readily for guerrillas, our second the query how an innocent belligerent may most properly take the initiative in proposing peace measures. I bethink me quickly of the poppy-seed cake, that on a famous occasion drugged another irate guardian, and at once fumble in my pocket for a few specimens of latter-day manufacture. As there is no known serum that will "immunize" the average functionary anywhere against the speedy reaction of such a sedative, I look for immediate results. Nor am I disappointed. "Cerberus" not only steps aside and magniloquently bids us partake freely of all that the villa has to offer, but also evinces a significant willingness to act as our host and *cicerone*. This offer is quite to our mind. We establish a still more intimate relation with the bailiff by announcing our several connections with properly accredited classical movements in that land which the bestowal of the poppy-seed cake had instantly intimated was ours.

It is with less scientific than poetic ardor that we now begin our rapid survey of the ruins. We are thinking not so much of the restored "*opus reticulatum*" of the sustaining walls; not so much of the tessellated frag-

ments of floors in the spaces that anciently were rooms; not so much of architectural detail and conjectural reconstruction, as of that clamorous longing—now, if ever, to be gratified—for some echo of the Teian strings once strummed in yonder garden of roses. One is always at a loss for words when standing in holy places. The imagination is busy with unutterable things. Mental pictures, that defy reproduction, are flashing before one's mind. As I strive impotently to define in word-images what I seem to see and feel to have been the life going on in this sequestered spot two milleniums ago, I recall Horace's advice to scribblers, good, bad, or indifferent: "*Select a subject well within your powers; he who chooses effectively shall lack neither facility nor felicity of expression.*"¹ The subject matter of my retrospections is clearly "*non aequa viribus,*"² and so I turn mechanically from a dream castle of the past to a very present heap of stone and mortar.

Reckless deforestation, which must have gone on in Italy, I cannot say how long, has been the great ally of natural erosion. Deprived of trees the mountain sides "wash" freely during the rainy season and severe storms. This is one of the sorrowful notes that that fair land strikes to-day in the heart

¹A. P., 38.

²Beyond my powers.

of the visitor. The Apennines are shorn of their glory, which is hardly atoned for by other qualities that elicit our unfailing admiration, and their stricken and gullied sides are painful reminders of man's necessities and improvidence. It is plain that here on Horace's farm natural agencies thus augmented have been actively at work. Doubtless goodly portions of the poet's goat pasture on the hillside above us had long helped to cover the pavements on which we are walking, and still lie on the fish pond and other unexcavated sections.

Little wonder, then, that the villa's foundations lay until quite modern times buried well under the soil. During the Middle Ages nothing was known of the site. It is only since the Renaissance that the question has been asked: "Where was it?" This question was answered by two learned abbés about the middle of the eighteenth century, Capmartin de Chaupy (or de Chapuy) and De Sanctis. I shall not attempt to decide which one was the actual discoverer. Gaston Boissier¹ gives the credit to De Chaupy, and seems to regard De Sanctis as an interloper who tried to take undue advantage of the former's researches. But Boissier is a Frenchman and so is his De Chaupy, while De Sanctis is an Italian.

¹Vid. "The Country of Horace and Vergil," by Gaston Boissier (Putnam's).

Others ascribe the actual finding of the ruins to De Sanctis. However that may be, both abbés agreed that the villa stood where we now are, and the tradition formulated by them has held and gained ground for over a century and a half. A certain school of critics, among them Boissier, has believed that the house lay further west and south up the slope, nearer that human eagle's nest Rocca Giovane; but the probabilities seem to be strongly against this theory. Modern archaeologists and the Roman schools, if I am correctly informed, accept such evidence as there is (and it is chiefly from Horace's own allusions) as favoring by long odds the present site. And so it is officially known as the "*Villa d'Orazio*," and here the work of excavating is being carried on. It is a fair inference that this estate, presented by a man of Maecenas' wealth and power, to a man of letters who had won for himself in Rome the place we know Horace did win, was probably something more than a cottage and half a dozen acres of land. There is no evidence as to size—various estimates have ranged from thirty to a hundred acres—but up to the present no Roman villa so pretentious as this one has been uncovered here in the Licenza Valley, nor do there appear to be traditions of any others. As Roman estates went elsewhere, this country place of the



ROCCA GIOVANE



poet probably was a modest one, though here it must have seemed quite palatial to Horace's more humble neighbors.

As increasing the probabilities that our site is the real one is the fact that a copious stream from a near-by source flows a little to the north, as I recall it, of the ruins, and may well have been the

*"Fons etiam rivo dare nomen idoneus"*¹

(included by Horace in a somewhat indefinite description of his farm), which seems to be the beginning of the main stream of the valley, the *"Fiume Licenza."*

Furthermore, as we stand in perhaps one of Horace's guest chambers, we are reminded that a Roman archaeologist of authority regards the pattern of the mosaic pavement as being distinctively Republican in character.

But after all is said, it must be confessed that we have no absolute and irrefutable proof that this is very Villa of Horatian villas. It *probably* was. It cannot be shown that it was not. The situation is not unlike that depicted on the geographical maps of the north and south polar regions in our whilom geographies, before the wavering red lines were added that marked the final achievements of Peary and Amundsen ; the

¹"A fountain of sufficient size to name the river."
(Epp. I, 16, 12.)

colors of the known all converge toward the unknown and hem it in unescapably, but still they fade at last into that narrow white circle of only hopeful uncertainty.

Perhaps further digging will bring to light the long sought positive bit of evidence, some inscription or bronze tablet that will confirm our prejudices. Perhaps it lies there now under the detritus that covers what our "Cerberus" says may be the "*piscina*" or fish pond of the villa. But there is no hope that we shall see it to-day before we leave.

Facing these facts, however, does not diminish the keenness of our interest, or lessen our belief, in the reality of what we are seeing. We note that the reticulate stone work of the main walls has been artificially built up to a height of two or three feet, so as to appear better, by the authorities in charge of the work. "Cerberus" shows us a newly excavated "*Nymphaeum*" (fountain dedicated to the water nymphs), and a rectangular stone hole with underground conduits leading from it, which is thought possibly to have been a heating plant. The remains of a long portico, extending out in front of the villa, have also been uncovered, and we are told that there is a large area in that part of the grounds which is still to be attacked with pick and shovel. Truly, the villa is more

elaborate than we had thought, when earlier in the day the padre of Licenza (we smile as we recall him) had shown us from afar a pile of stones in a brushwood clearing.

It is now luncheon time, and our journey afoot to Vicovaro over the footpaths of Lucretilis by way of Rocca Giovane must be begun betimes, for the sky has been clouding up, though we had not noticed it, and—yes, it is actually beginning to rain. “Cerberus” invites us into his tool hut until the shower shall pass, and secures our valuable signatures in the Visitors’ Book, in which we note many familiar names.

The shower is over. We bid “Cerberus” whole-hearted farewells mingled with more “poppy-seed cakes,” take a last look at the gray stones that once knew those “*Noctes ceneaeque Deum*,”¹ and begin our climb up the hill to the westward, into fields, it may be, where his neighbors were wont to smile as they saw the poet’s puffing figure laboriously

“*glebas et saxa moventem*,”²

in company with his slaves or freedmen.

The real “*Fons Bandusiae*” may have been at Venusium; but we know that there is another one, so called, near our pathway.

¹“Nights and banquets of the gods.” (Sat. II, 6, 65.)

²Epp. I, 14, 39, “moving clods and stones.”

Of course we must not go by without at least a glimpse of it. We find it with little trouble, for the ground all about us is wet with its overflow, as might be expected at this season. It is a tiny cascade, a mountain-side spring, the main source of the "*Digentia*" (Licenza). It is cool and attractive, but as the padre's mellow draughts have not yet developed that inevitable after-thirst, we remain only long enough to visualize the picture of a pretty pool lying in some indistinguishable ruins of stone, and proceed on our way.

Under a tree in a bit of olive orchard we halt for bread and sausage. Through a rift in the foliage we can see the villa's ruins well below us. It is our last view. At the foot of the slope just in front of us stand an ass and her foal. I wager that during our stay one or the other of the beasts will move perceptibly. I lose. Sabine peace is evidently in and of everything. Overcoming the seductive somnolence we also feel, and drawing from our pockets copies of that "*Monumentum aere perennius*," we celebrate a brief Horatian sacrament, by re-reading three or four of the poet's many allusions to his farm and the simple life he led there.

Horace writes (Sat. II, 6) that he had wanted a farm for some time before this one was given him. We can readily understand

how a man of his sensitiveness would soon weary of the artificial life he had to lead in Rome as his popularity grew. He says: "*How I used to long for just a half-acre or so with a shack on it, a vegetable garden, a well, and a couple of nice trees! Well, I have them, and vastly more. The gods have certainly treated me royally. I am quite content.*"

To some otherwise unknown friend he writes another time (Epp. I, 16): "*Anticipating your query, my dear Quinctius, about my farm, its character, location, crops, meadows, fruits and vines, I will give you a short description right now (doubtless you'll think my pride has made me unusually garrulous!): a mass of hills, unbroken save by this well-wooded valley, lies all about me. The valley runs nearly north and south; that is, the morning sun illumines its western or right-hand side, and the afternoon sun its eastern. Climate—perfect. Cherries and plums in abundance. Two or three kinds of oak trees furnish mast for my porkers and shade for me. You'd think it quite like Colorado or southern California. There's a brook here too that's colder than the Pinguisibi, and the water seems to agree with me perfectly. O, I tell you there's no place like this for me during the sizzling days!*"

"I promised you," he writes to Maccenas (Epp. I, 7), "*that I would come back from the country in five days, and, liar that I am, I have been here all of August. If I were really ill,*

I know you would forgive me; will you not also forgive me for having remained away merely out of fear of being ill, now that early fogs and hot weather are keeping the undertaker busy, and even the trifling affairs of senate and forum are bringing on fevers and necessitating night sessions of the Probate Court.'

In one of the Epodes (I, 31) Horace says to Maecenas:

"Thy bounty hath enriched me beyond my dreams."

In Od. II, 16, 37, we read: *"To me unerring Fate hath given a small domain, . . . the fine breath of Grecian song, and scorn for the envious crowd."*¹

And in Od. III, I, 41:

*"But if nor Phrygian marble satisfies,
Nor purple brighter far than starry skies;
If costly wine and oriental nard
Have lost their savor for a soul-sick bard —
Then why should I erect a columned pile,
Or lofty hall, to stir up envious bile?
Why should I change my Sabine Valley, pray,
For all the irksome riches of Cathay?"*

This ceremonial reading of Horace over, we forsake the olive grove and our unresponsive comrades and return to the rough hillside trail. We have heard of another Bandusian fount, which we know cannot be far hence. We are in dire need of it, for our thirst has reached an alarming stage.

¹ Bennett's tr.

Faunus leads us thither. It must have been the god himself, else we had never found it. We are reasonably sure that nothing will ever be able to shake our belief that this is the only real, authentic, genuine "*Fons Bandusiae*," as we kneel by a babbling runnel that gushes in considerable volume from a crevice in a rock protected by overhanging foliage. The water is as clear as a New England spring. One of us in his eagerness partially falls in, but he cheerfully hangs up his "dripping vestments" as an offering, and vows an ode to the "*Genius Loci*." To us, reflecting on the delicate structure of odes, philosophizing and listening to the music of the waters, cometh an ancient yet picturesque beldame with short, scant skirt and huge brogans, and bearing a large bundle on her head. At the sight of us lounging by the spring, the crone is evidently startled. But she recovers quickly, and, dropping her bundle for a drink, cackles in toothless Sabine: "*Buona sera, signori; ecco la fontana Bandusiana!*" Now we know without doubt where we are. For us the age-long debate is ended, and we make our due acknowledgments, both verbally and substantially. The aged one departs in a cloud of "*Grazie*"s, we consult our watches, and discover that we must fly. The ode is never finished, which is just as well, for we have no desire to dim the lustre of Horace.

Our dream journey to Rocca Giovane through the afternoon shadows is as unforgettable as a Palatine sunset. Innumerable nightingales sing us entirely apart from ourselves. We become wholly unaware of any earthly relationship. Every tree contains one of these elusive phantoms singing its undying melody to our ravished ears.

“Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality.”

In the pygmy town of Rocca Giovane, which clings to the indented rocks like a stronghold of the Peruvian Incas, there is a Horatian association that must claim our brief attention. It is with regret that we shake ourselves, as we emerge from a grove directly into the village, and wonder if we be truly mortals. But the spell cast by the little “Dryads of the trees” is gone, for the “Fane of Vacuna,” that stirs our memories, lies yonder, now the village church. Imbedded in its walls is an inscription which we easily find and read. It tells us that “*Vespasian rebuilt at his own expense this temple of Victory, which time had*

nearly destroyed." In his epistle to his old friend Aristius Fuscus,¹ the one in which he refers to Fuscus as a lover of the city and to himself as a lover of the country, "*but in other respects they are like a pair of old doves nodding together on a perch,*" and then goes on to say: "*You, Fuscus, keep the nest, while I circle abroad admiring the streams, the mossy rocks and the woodland*"—in this epistle Horace closes by saying: "*I am writing this from the tumble-down temple of Vacuna, and am quite content, barring your absence.*" There was uncertainty about it among the Romans, I believe, but some of their antiquarians identified *Vacuna* with *Victoria*, *Vacuna* being the name of a Sabine goddess. It is quite clear that Vespasian, who we know was of Sabine extraction, accepted this theory, as the inscription shows. If the identification is correct, then it must have been near where we now are that Horace wrote that friendly and playful letter.

The church to-day commands a wide prospect. The entire valley from the Anio to Licenza and beyond is spread out before it. But we must cut short our ruminations, and see if there is not some way out of town and down to the valley other than the quasi conventional one suggested to us by the

¹Epp. I, 10

padre of guileful memory. There is one, we find, but the difference between it and the other is so slight as to be negligible. However, if parlous, the descent is full of excitement and pleasure, and at last, enveloped in the deepening shadows of a Sabine evening, we are safely on the turnpike, trudging to Vicovaro and our train.

Crossing the Campagna after dark, with the distant glimmering lights of Rome beckoning us to comfort and repose, drinking in such odors of a fragrant April night as Horace must have known, it is difficult for us to believe that threescore and more generations of ever-changing humanity have trod these poppies under foot, since the poet, to whom we have gladly done honor to-day, laid aside his stylus forever. Time, after all, is but an impression, easily effaced; the dead and the living are one.



THIS PAPER WAS WRITTEN FOR
THE CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB
AND WAS READ BEFORE THE
CLUB ON MONDAY EVENING,
FEBRUARY THE EIGHTH, NINE-
TEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN.
EDITION, THREE HUNDRED AND
EIGHTY-ONE COPIES, PRINTED
FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE CLUB,
IN THE MONTH OF MAY, NINE-
TEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN





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